

**To The Chair and Members of the
Regeneration and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Panel**

**REGENERATION & ENVIRONMENT OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL WORK
UPDATE AND PROGRESS WITH THE 2011/12 WORK PLAN.**

Relevant Cabinet Member(s)	Wards Affected	Key Decision
The Mayor Councillor M Thompson Councillor R Mullis Councillor C Ransome	All	None

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. This report gives an update to the Regeneration and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Panel on progress with the work plan for 2011/12. It allows the Panel to monitor what developments have been made, work that has been undertaken in relation to the work plan, information, updates and correspondence since the meeting held on 19th December 2011. As a live document the work plan allows the Panel to review it in order to develop and reprioritise items where necessary.

EXEMPT REPORT

2. Not exempt

RECOMMENDATIONS

3. It is recommended that the Panel: -
 - a. Receive and comment on the progress made against the work programme since June 2011 as included in the report and Appendix A and B;
 - b. Receive and comment on correspondence made between the Panel and the Executive as well as the updated action plan in Appendix C to J.
 - c. Receive a briefing note on Neighbourhood Investment Plan as included in Appendix K.
 - d. Receive feedback from Enterprising Doncaster meeting which took place on the 2nd March 2012
 - e. Note future workshops regarding Allocations Policy, Community Infrastructure levy and Neighbourhood Plans.

BACKGROUND

4. At its meeting on the 22nd June 2011, the Regeneration and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Panel agreed its work plan for the 2011/12 municipal year. It was accepted that the work plan would need to be regularly reviewed and updated to

ensure it remained relevant and reflected the work to be undertaken by the Panel and should take account of planning particularly looking at capacity and prioritisation.

5. Members agreed that the workplan should be focused and only include three or four items that they would look at in more detail. It was also noted that there maybe Forward Plan items that would need to be included onto the work plan during the year.

PROGRESS MADE AGAINST THE WORKPLAN

Progress made against the Regeneration and Environmental Overview and Scrutiny Workplan

6. There have been 7 Regeneration and Environment Overview and Scrutiny formal panel meetings held during the year, this is in addition to 5 informal meetings (including site visits). The three main areas of focus for the workplan as agreed at the informal panel meeting include the following: - Delivery of Regeneration and the Environment across the Borough against the Localism Bill, Private Sector Housing Delivery, Environmental Strategy (Policy Development). The Panel also undertook a review into Opportunity Centres and considered a number of other issues through the formal panel meetings.

Detailed below is a brief summary of some of the Panel's key outcomes during the course of the year within each of those three areas: -

- a. **Implications of the Decentralisation & Localism Bill for Regeneration & Environment Work**

An informal meeting was held on 26th July 2011 to consider the Implications of the Decentralisation and Localism Bill for Regeneration & Environment. It was agreed by Members to consider further information on more specific areas within housing. An Update on Delivery of Key Housing Implications Resulting from the Localism Act report was considered by the Panel at its meeting in December 2011 and a number of recommendations were made by the Panel.

- b. **Private Sector Housing Delivery**

The Panel has also considered Affordable Private Housing Development through informal meetings that took place in November 2011. The Panel met with Officers and received a presentation outlining the Council's approach to affordable housing. This was followed by an informal meeting with representatives from the private housing development sector where there was a lengthy and informative debate focusing on how further affordable housing can be encouraged and what are the barriers to developing it. As a result a number of recommendations were made by the Panel.

- c. **Doncaster Council's Environmental Strategy 2012-15**

A working group was set up by the Panel last year to undertake policy development work of the Environmental Strategy 2012-2015. They met in December 2011 when a discussion was held on the Themes within the Strategy including: -

- Theme 1 - Energy
- Theme 2 - Climate
- Theme 3 - Natural Environment

Since this meeting the strategy has been delayed for completion until the 2012/2013 municipal year.

d. **Opportunity Centres**

A short review was chosen by the Panel to look at Opportunity Centres, the main purpose of this area of work as agreed by the Panel was to: -

- Identify why people do not use Opportunity Centres and what can be done to change this and encourage more usage – part of a full day review consisting of site visits and group meetings to feed into the Council's own review into Opportunity Centres.
- To explore how Opportunity Centres fit into the **New Work Programme** run by A4E and Serco and Job Centre Plus (as part of an informal meeting that took place in August 2011)

Following the review, a number of recommendations were agreed by the Panel and were forwarded to the Executive for consideration. A further meeting has taken place at which the Panel considered various options presented by the Council's own internal review.

e. **Other**

Enterprising Doncaster Meetings - In order to improve communications, the Chair of the Panel has attended a number of Enterprising Doncaster meetings in the capacity as an observer and fed back on key issues back to the Panel. The Panel has and will continue to engage with public and private representatives from Enterprising Doncaster on a number of key issues affecting the future of the Borough in terms of economical growth and sustainability.

Stadium Management Company (SMC) Finance Update - Members of the Panel met with tenants of the Keepmoat Stadium during informal meetings which took place during October 2011 and used the evidence gathered to help inform recommendations that were made at a formal Panel meeting. Since the formal meeting that took place in October 2011, the Panel has requested a report on the SMC Options for them to consider. This meeting has been provisionally arranged to take place in March 2012.

New Work Programme – An informal meeting took place in September 2011 to receive information on the new Work Programme. Members expressed an interest in receiving a further report, the purpose of this is so that the Panel can look at the progress made, performance information, what challenges have been faced etc. Members of the Panel have also shown interest in the information focusing on those clients with more complex needs, barriers and to look at what the gaps are. Although a report is not available at this current time, the Chair and Vice Chair are looking to meet with the appropriate representatives informally to discuss sharing of information and the work programme further.

Performance Information - The Panel has received ongoing quarterly performance reports from both St Leger Homes as well as Doncaster MBC focusing on the relevant Regeneration and Environment performance areas in more detail.

Portfolio Updates - The Chair and Vice Chair of the Panel have met with all Cabinet Members with relevant portfolio areas within the remit of the Regeneration and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Panel on a number of occasions. Those Cabinet Members have included the following: -

- Mayor Peter Davies - Development; Transport; Equalities and Cohesion; Change Agenda
- Councillor Ray Mullis - Housing
- Councillor Mark Thompson - Finance and Corporate Services; Environment; Trading and Support Services
- Councillor Cynthia Ransome - Communities; Street Scene; Environment Protection

The above Cabinet Members have also been invited and attended the Panel's formal meetings on a regular basis to present and update their priorities.

Briefing Notes - A number of briefing notes have been received since June 2011 which includes updates on: -

- Local Enterprise Partnerships/Enterprise Zones
- Invest in Doncaster Update
- Tourism Update
- Community Infrastructure Levy
- Civic Cultural Quarter
- Doncaster Chamber Skills Review
- Doncaster's Aligned Solution for Business Support/ Invest in Doncaster
- Neighbourhood Investment Plans
- Core Strategy/Waste DPD

7. Regeneration and Environmental Panel meeting held on the 19th December 2011

Correspondence has been attached following the meeting of the Panel on the 19th December 2011 including the following: -

- Proposed Approach to Out Future Tenancy Strategy (Appendix C and D).
- Environmental Strategy (Appendix E and F).
- Opportunity Centres Review (Appendix G and H).
- Affordable Private Housing Development (Appendix I and J).

8. Neighbourhood Investment Plans

The informal meeting that had been previously arranged in January has been delayed until further notice. A briefing note which has been circulated to Members of both the Regeneration and Environment and Adults and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Panel and has been included in Appendix K.

9. Allocations Policy/Neighbourhood Plans/Community Infrastructure Levy

There will be a couple of workshops arranged during March and June 2012 for Members to attend to look at areas including the Allocations Policy, Neighbourhoods Plans and Community Infrastructure Levy. The first one will take place on Monday the 26th March 2012 at 2pm in the Mansion House and the second one is to be arranged for June 2012. Following these workshops, it is planned that a report will come to a future scrutiny panel meeting later in June 2012.

OPTIONS CONSIDERED

10. There are no specific options to consider within this report as it provides an opportunity for the Panel to develop a work plan for 2011/12.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDED OPTION

11. This report provides the Panel with an opportunity to develop its work plan for 2011/12 and reflect on progress made.

IMPACT ON THE COUNCIL’S KEY OBJECTIVES

Priority Theme	Mayor’s Priorities for 2011/12	Implications of this initiative
1. Creating a strong, connected and inclusive economy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Drive forward the Doncaster economy • Get the balance of public and private transport right • Promote Doncaster as a tourist destination • Regenerate Doncaster's town centres 	The Overview and Scrutiny function has the potential to impact upon all of the council’s key objectives by holding decision makers to account, reviewing performance and developing policy through robust recommendations, monitoring performance of council and external partners services and reviewing issues outside the remit of the council that have an impact on the residents of the borough.
2. Developing stronger communities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage community harmony and cohesion. Treat people as individuals, not by reference to labels and artificial groupings 	
3. Increasing and improving housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raise housing standards 	
4. Protecting and improving all our children’s lives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to improve education and skills • Build on a strengthening Children's Service 	
5. Improving health and support for independent lives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encourage attitudes of self-reliance, self-improvement and mutual respect within Doncaster communities 	
6. Tackling crime and anti-social behaviour	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce crime and all forms of anti-social behaviour 	
7. Creating a cleaner and better environment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to protect the environment from developers, decay and architectural vandalism 	
8. Internal Transformation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure local people get value for money from council services 	

RISKS & ASSUMPTIONS

12. To maximise the effectiveness of the Overview and Scrutiny function it is important that the work plan devised is manageable and that it accurately reflects the broad range of issues within its remit. Failure to achieve this can reduce the overall impact of the function. Ensuring the work plan is developed with a key set of principles in mind e.g. holding to account, undertaking policy review and development and is focused strategically will help support the development of a robust work programme. The work plan will be reviewed at each ordinary meeting and officers will advise on the capacity available to undertake any additional work. This will provide an opportunity to ensure work plans can be regularly monitored and reviewed.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

13. The Council's Constitution states that subject to matters being referred to it by the Full Council, or the Executive and any timetables laid down by those references the Regeneration and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Panel will determine its own Work Programme (Overview and Scrutiny Procedure Rule 6a).
14. Specific legal implications and advice will be given with any reports when Overview and Scrutiny have received them as items for consideration.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

15. The budget for the support of the Overview and Scrutiny function 2011/12 is not affected by this report, however, the delivery of the work plan will need to take place within agreed budgets. Any specific financial implications arising from the work undertaken by the Panel in respect of the issues identified in the work plan will be the subject of future reports

CONSULTATION

16. No consultation was required for this report.

REPORT AUTHOR & CONTRIBUTORS

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Regeneration and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Workplan 2011/2012

	21st June 2011	26th July 2011 (Informal Meeting)	8th August 2011 (Informal Meeting)	22nd Aug 2011	22nd Sept 2011 (Informal Meeting)
Policy Review/ Development		Delivery of Regeneration & Environment through Localism Bill	Opportunity Centres Site Visits and Meeting (meeting to take place out in the community)		Serco, A4E and Job Centre Plus
Performance	Performance 2010/11 (Qtr 4)				
Information Updates	Presentation on the R&E Directorate			Briefing Note: - LEP/ Enterprise Zones	
Scrutiny (Holding to Account)	Cabinet Members Portfolio Updates - Cllr R Mullis Cllr C Ransome			Cabinet Members Portfolio Updates – Mayor _P Davies	
Other	R&E Terms of Reference 2011/12				
	R&E Workplan 2011/12			R&E Workplan 2011/12	

Appendix A

	4th Oct 2011	21st Oct 2011 (Formal & Informal Meeting)	15th Nov 2011 (Formal & Informal Meetings)	19th Dec 2011	5th Mar 2012
Policy Review/ Development		<p>Informal meeting with users of the Keepmoat Stadium</p> <p>Followed by:</p> <p>Financial Update on SMC (Formal)</p>	Private Sector Housing Delivery (Informal) – Officers and representatives from Private Housing Developers	Update on delivery of key housing implications resulting from the Localism Act.	Environmental Strategy
				Opportunity Centres – DMBC Review	
Performance	St Leger Holmes/DMBC Performance 2011/12 (Qtr 1)			St Leger Holmes/DMBC Performance 2011/12 (Qtr 2)	St Leger Holmes/DMBC Performance 2011/12 (Qtr 3)
Information Updates	Briefing Note: - Tourism Update			Briefing Notes including: - Invest in Doncaster Update/CIL/CCQ/Doncaster Chamber Skills Review/ Doncaster's Aligned Solution for Business Support/ Invest in Doncaster	
Scrutiny (Holding to Account)	Cabinet Members Portfolio Updates – Cllr M Thompson		Cabinet Members Portfolio Updates - Cllr Mullis	Cabinet Members Portfolio Updates - Cllr Ransome	Cabinet Member Portfolio Update: - Peter Davies, Mayor of Doncaster
Other	R&E Workplan 2011/12	R &E Workplan 2011/12	R&E Workplan 2011/12	R&E Workplan 2011/12	R&E Workplan 2011/12

Recommendations Made To the Executive - Update

In order to ensure clarity and to support the continual monitoring of the recommendations made throughout the year needs to be considered by the Panel.

Ref	Recommendation	1 Accepted Y/N/ Partly	2. Initial Response	3. Any Immediate or further action required	4 Timescale	5 Who (Officer/ Member)	6 Progress on implementation (R&E O&S to complete)	7 Impact (R&E O&S to complete)
21st October 2011 – Stadium Management Company (S.M.C.) Financial Update October 2011								
1.	That the Mayor seeks to find the best deal to enable the Keepmoat stadium to remain open.	Yes	The best options available for the Stadium going forward are currently being investigated.	R&E O&S to hold scrutiny meeting prior to decision being made,	ASAP	Simon Wiles, Director of Finance and Corporate Services		
2.	That as part of a future strategy, the S.M.C. develop a business plan and performance improvement plan	Partly	The overall business plan and performance plan will be considered along with any recovery plans, as part of the review of options. Limited effort will be put into developing a business plan, until it is deemed necessary as part of the future plans for the Stadium.		ASAP	Simon Wiles, Director of Finance and Corporate Services		
3.	That consideration is given to the S.M.C. forming a leisure trust which will allow tenants of the stadium to have a partnership status	Partly	All options are being considered as part of the review. Steps have been put in place to improve relationships with the tenants.		ASAP	Simon Wiles, Director of Finance and Corporate Services		
4.	That communication is improved and a more open	Yes	These points are covered in 3. Above, There has		Ongoing			

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	<p>style of dialogue is undertaken between the S.M.C. Executive and tenants, in particular, by: -</p> <p>A. Reviewing the structure and effectiveness of S.M.C. Board Meetings and other meetings, for example, Tenants Group meetings and to consider the formation of a Stakeholder Committee.</p> <p>B. Providing full feedback where possible.</p> <p>C. Undertaking further dialogue with all tenants, in particular Doncaster rovers, concerning the options that are available to generate further income.</p>		<p>been assurance that dialogue has improved with tenants recently, and that regular meetings are taking place.</p>					
5.	<p>That the Keepmoat stadium organises and holds an 'open day' for children and young people across the borough. For children and young people to be shown around the facilities and meet with other sports team including the Doncaster Rovers, Doncaster Athletics, Doncaster Belles</p>	Yes	<p>This has been raised with all the tenant clubs, as part of the ongoing consultation process and agreed as a positive way forward to highlight the good work being done. Further discussions to take place.</p>		TBC			

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	and Doncaster Rugby Football Club.							
19th December 2011 – Future Tenancy Strategy								
6.	That there should be more flexibility for single parents who do not have full residency agreements.	Partly	A major review of the council's current allocation policy is about to be undertaken to take account of the impact of the localism act. Officers will therefore ensure that, as part of the review, the issue that O&S has raised will be factored into the options and recommendations for a new allocations policy.		End of 2012	Gary Wells – Assistant Director Strategic Housing		
7.	That there is clearer communication and clarification of the rights of children to become joint tenants where the parents are the main tenants.	Partly	Please see response below.		End of 2012	Gary Wells – Assistant Director Strategic Housing		
8.	That consideration and sensitivity needs to be given where bereavement of the tenant has occurred.	Partly	In the new guidance on allocation policies both these points will be considered in the allocations policy review process. Full consultation will take place with members.		End of 2012	Gary Wells – Assistant Director Strategic Housing		
9.	That consultation should include all relevant equalities and resident groups, housing associations and elected	Yes	A draft tenancy strategy is currently being developed by officers, together with a comprehensive list of consultees. All the groups			Gary Wells – Assistant Director Strategic Housing		

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	members		mentioned will be contacted for their comments, prior to a final draft being presented.					
10.	That the results of the consultation should be fed back to the regeneration and environment overview and scrutiny panel at appropriate intervals.	Yes	Feedback will be provided to R&E O&S as the consultation progresses.			Gary Wells – Assistant Director Strategic Housing		
19th December 2011 – Draft Environmental Strategy								
11.	That <u>Theme 1: Priority 2 - Develop energy efficient Housing and work with other sectors to improve their use of resources:</u> should include improving the energy efficiency of 'owner occupier households' within this section, in addition to social and private rented households.	Yes	The action in relation to improving the energy efficiency of 'owner occupied households' is included within the scope of the Strategy, as part of the work of our Energy Team.	None – Strategy delayed until 2012/2013	-	Iain Thomson – Service Improvement Manager Cllr Mark Thompson – Cabinet Member	N/A	N/A
12.	That consideration is given to changes within planning procedures to improve for example, energy and water efficiency in new builds as part of theme 1: priority 2 - <u>develop energy efficient housing and work with other sectors to improve their use of resources.</u>	Yes	Sustainable construction policies are a key part of our proposed LDF, which is referred to within the Environment Strategy.	None – Strategy delayed until 2012/2013	-	Iain Thomson – Service Improvement Manager Cllr Mark Thompson – Cabinet Member	N/A	N/A
13.	That further consideration should be given to	Yes	Actions in relation to promotion of the Council's	None – Strategy	-	Iain Thomson –	N/A	N/A

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	commercial waste, clinical waste and recyclable waste within Theme 1: Priority 3 – Continue to reduce the amount of waste going to landfill and to process waste more efficiently.		Commercial Waste service are included.	delayed until 2012/2013		Service Improvement Manager Cllr Mark Thompson – Cabinet Member		
14.	That further consideration is given to examples of best practice regarding Renewable Energy to schemes and organisations from around Britain.	Yes	The draft Strategy has a priority relating to 'Promoting Green Business and encouraging existing businesses to be Green'. This section will address points 4 and 5 in your letter.	None – Strategy delayed until 2012/2013	-	Iain Thomson – Service Improvement Manager Cllr Mark Thompson – Cabinet Member	N/A	N/A
15.	That Doncaster Council need to ensure that there are systems and support mechanisms in place to assist the establishment and sustainability of future renewable schemes that are set up within the Borough.	Yes	As above	None – Strategy delayed until 2012/2013	-	Iain Thomson – Service Improvement Manager Cllr Mark Thompson – Cabinet Member	N/A	N/A
16.	That in respect of <u>Theme 2: Priority 1 – Effective Flood Adaption and Emergency Planning</u> , the problems associated with flooding within the Borough are identified and the Council	Yes	The problems associated with flooding are fully recognised within the draft Strategy, and an entire priority has been devoted to how we effectively adapt to our	None – Strategy delayed until 2012/2013	-	Iain Thomson – Service Improvement Manager Cllr Mark	N/A	N/A

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	ensure that partnering organisations such as the Drainage Board recognise their duty and responsibilities.		circumstances.			Thompson – Cabinet Member		
17.	That further work needs to be undertaken to improve the visual image of the Borough, in particular, gateways and signage.	Yes	Work on improving the visual image of the Borough, and on allotments, is covered within the draft Strategy.	None – Strategy delayed until 2012/2013	-	Iain Thomson – Service Improvement Manager Cllr Mark Thompson – Cabinet Member	N/A	N/A
18.	That ‘allotments’ should be incorporated within <u>theme 3: priority 3 – ensure Doncaster’s residents can enjoy access to high quality, green spaces, the countryside, cultural heritage and public realm.</u>	Yes	As above	None – Strategy delayed until 2012/2013	-	Iain Thomson – Service Improvement Manager Cllr Mark Thompson – Cabinet Member	N/A	N/A
19.	That consideration needs to be given to other organisations of best practice regarding their environment strategy and underlying action plans.	Yes	Other organisations’ Environmental Strategies have been considered in the development of the draft Strategy.	None – Strategy delayed until 2012/2013	-	Iain Thomson – Service Improvement Manager Cllr Mark Thompson – Cabinet Member	N/A	N/A

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20.	That a section on 'monitoring and reporting' is incorporated into the strategy.	Yes	Each priority has a set of 'results' that should be attained through the implementation of the Strategy. The Council will actively monitor our progress against these, following the adoption of the final Strategy.	None – Strategy delayed until 2012/2013		Iain Thomson – Service Improvement Manager Cllr Mark Thompson – Cabinet Member	N/A	N/A
19th December 2011 – Affordable Private Housing Development								
21.	That planning procedures are reviewed in order to identify potential areas of improvement, in particular for the following:- <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The waiting times for responding to pre-application enquiries • The robustness of planning guidelines being adhered to • How planning policies could be made more flexible and what new ways of working could be developed to encourage the development of more private housing 	Partly	The Council has, through its LDF Core Strategy, proposed a very ambitious housing target confirmed by the inspector, will be translated into a housing land allocation which will give the housing industry a considerable choice of sites, and help support the delivery of more housing. The policies of the Core Strategy provide considerable flexibility for developers, while seeking to ensure that the Council's wider housing and regeneration objectives are not undermined.					
22.	That the Regeneration And Environment Overview And Scrutiny Panel have an	Yes	Officers will work with the Panel members as CIL develops over the coming		June 2012			

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	input into the final Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) through receiving a report at a future panel meeting.		months, including a proposed workshop in March, prior to Full Council consideration after the elections.					
23.	That the appropriate Overview and Scrutiny Panel considers the issue of Neighbourhoods Plans in further detail, particularly the issue of affordable housing.	Yes	A process for considering Neighbourhood Plan requests, and the prioritisation for dealing with those requests, is being developed. O&S will be consulted. To assist in the understanding of the emerging Neighbourhood Planning regulations, two Planning Aid workshops have been organised.		June 2012			
24.	That A Review Of Pre-Application Planning Fees For Housing Association ('Affordable Housing') Schemes Is Undertaken With Consideration Given To A Reduction To The Level Of The Lowest Fees Charged Elsewhere In Yorkshire.	No	Within South Yorkshire, no Council offers discounted pre-application fees to housing associations. The fixed fees were based on size of developments regardless of public, private or charitable status of the enquirer.	-	-	-	-	-
25.	That The Regeneration And Environment Overview And Scrutiny Panel Are Provided With An Overview Of The Implications Of The Development And Building Of Additional Bungalows.	Yes	A small element of bungalows on its regeneration sites by the Council. The Council can try and encourage developers to	-	-	-	-	-

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			investigate the viability of more bungalow provision, but it would be difficult to “require” bungalows as part of a mix - see letter					
26.	That as a local authority we continue to develop with housing associations and other investors to help maximise access to all forms of development funding.	Yes	The Council has a panel of Housing Association Development Partners which is developing Affordable Homes over the 2011-15 period.	-	-	-	-	-
27.	That we review the feasibility and level of risk of providing mortgages and loans to enable residents within the Borough to purchase their own homes. This could include looking at those other authorities that are already providing such service.	Yes	Officers are exploring examples of where other LAs are currently providing mortgages, and will provide advice as to whether this would be viable in Doncaster.			Gary Wells – Assistant Director Strategic Housing		
28.	That further work is undertaken to look at the feasibility and potential benefits from alternative approaches and schemes to increase the delivery of affordable housing. This includes the following options: - a. Deferred Land Payments b. Pursuing Cross	Yes	See Letter			Gary Wells – Assistant Director Strategic Housing		

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	Subsidy/Multi-Site Development c. Self Build d. Rent to Buy and Other Tenure Options e. Lend A Hand							

Opportunity Centre Action Plan - The following recommendations (accompanied by supporting evidence) can be found in section 3 of the review report.

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3.7	<p>To develop more outreach work as a key mechanism of developing Opportunity Centres to engage more with partners as well as businesses. To consider reinstating the Opportunity Centre bus to cover the Borough wide area or most disadvantaged areas though investigating alternative funding mechanisms e.g. From the sponsorship of local businesses or as part of an approved learning agreement.</p>							
3.11	<p>To create a stronger and more co-ordinated marketing and communication strategy through working with the DMBC Communications team. To include within the strategy a strand to achieve better publicity and to increase awareness raising especially within the communities through incorporating the following methods: -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better advertising for example through utilising local websites such as Jobs Doncaster. • Having a stand at Job Fairs. • Word of mouth through Invest Team, Councillors (though working with Success Doncaster team) • Maximising networking opportunities. 							

Appendix B.2

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identifying and utilising what resources are available through the community such as community groups, alternative venues i.e. social clubs, bookies, local post offices, local establishments including off licences, newsagents and chip shops etc. • To publicise centres with organisations (including DMBC) when there are large scale redundancies. • To target those within jobs but maybe looking to change careers. 							
3.18	<p>To undertake a more joined up approach to working with Prime Contractors and Partners (including to encourage more referrals being made through organisations such as Job Centre Plus). That the Manager of Opportunity Centres meets with these organisations to look at how this can be achieved.</p>							
3.22	<p>To assess the feasibility of moving Opportunity Centres under the Neighbourhood Management Model or at the very least to establish closer links with the Neighbourhood Management team. This should be done by involving the Neighbourhood Managers in steering groups, writing the specifications for the Opportunity Centres and future training of the Library staff.</p>							

Appendix B.2

Ref	Recommendation	1 Accepted Y/N/ Partly	2. Initial Response	3. Any Immediate or further action required	4 Timescale	5 Who (Officer/ Member)	6 Progress on implementation (R&E O&S to complete)	7 Impact (R&E O&S to complete)
3.26	<p>To investigate how to engage with and provide help, support and encouragement to those from more disadvantaged communities.</p> <p>One option is to look at the feasibility of the Opportunity Centre becoming more of a 'Front Line Customer Care Centre'. This should be achieved through delivering a wider range of services through Partners, focusing on the barriers that individuals are experiencing preventing them from gaining employment. This could be achieved through surgeries, weekly sessions, counselling sessions etc to strengthen the support available for individuals to address and overcome personal barriers including but not limited to: -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Financial inclusion issues such as debt management, providing a facility or access to a Credit Union facility, benefits advice etc • Childcare/Other Carer role • Travel • Literacy Skills • Other long term conditions such as learning difficulties, lack of confidence etc. <p>In order to provide a wider service</p>							

Appendix B.2

Ref	Recommendation	1 Accepted Y/N/ Partly	2. Initial Response	3. Any Immediate or further action required	4 Timescale	5 Who (Officer/ Member)	6 Progress on implementation (R&E O&S to complete)	7 Impact (R&E O&S to complete)
	provision, the Council should investigate utilising Health and Well Being officers by broadening their work remit to include knowledge on work support schemes.							
3.31	The development of a 'buddy system' which could utilise those clients already working with the Opportunity Centres. This system could be used to promote the centres and encourage those who are more disengaged to use them, help mentor new clients and aid development of the client themselves. It is recognised however, that there will be confidentiality issues which would have to be taken into consideration.							
3.34	Carry out a stocktake of what facilities are available within existing and future locations which should be revisited every two years to ensure that they are meeting the needs of the clients. To ensure that there is a private room or space available where possible.							
3.38	To identify what volunteering opportunities exist within the Borough and how they could be offered to clients accessing the centres through establishing closer links with the third and private sector.							
3.40	To encourage a more proactive role of local businesses and link in with major developments in the Borough i.e. Inland Port. To organise such activities as: -							

Appendix B.2

Ref	Recommendation	1 Accepted Y/N/ Partly	2. Initial Response	3. Any Immediate or further action required	4 Timescale	5 Who (Officer/ Member)	6 Progress on implementation (R&E O&S to complete)	7 Impact (R&E O&S to complete)
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Speakers from local businesses to come to the centres to speak to users on what they look for when recruiting. • Mentoring Opportunities with local businesses. • Open days at local businesses which are looking to recruit on a large scale or due to seasonal fluctuations. • Identifying and advertising training/apprenticeship opportunities with local businesses i.e. interview techniques. 							
3.42	<p>Encourage further links with schools and colleges and raise awareness of Opportunity Centres through links and supply of information. To identify how such establishments could become involved with the centre.</p>							
3.45	<p>To establish long term plans for Opportunity Centres to establish them in the communities. This should focus on improving consistency and ensuring that there is a dedicated staff and support through appropriate training. Where possible any further disruption to staff and the centres should be minimised i.e. closing and reopening where possible and pursuing alternative funding.</p>							

6th January 2012

Peter Davies
Mayor of Doncaster
Floor 1
The Council House
College Road
Doncaster
DN1 3AJ

Dear Peter

Proposed Approach to Our Future Tenancy Strategy

At the Regeneration and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Panel Meeting held on the 19th December 2011, the Panel received a report which provided an update on Doncaster MBC's proposed approach to its future Tenancy Strategy as part of the Council's response to the Localism Act.

The Panel noted the contents of the report and the following recommendations and comments were made:-

1. That there should be more flexibility for single parents who do not have full residency agreements.

Concern was expressed about those tenants who were single parents who did not have full residency of their children and therefore whose children only stayed at the parent's house for part of the week. It was felt that parents in those circumstances would still require additional rooms to accommodate their children when they were staying even though it wasn't on a permanent basis.

Cont'd

2. **That there is clearer communication and clarification of the rights of children to become joint tenants where the parents are the main tenants.**

It was felt that it was not clear nor widely known that children could be included on a tenancy agreement as joint tenants along with their parents. Some Members believed that this should be made clearer and be more widely communicated as it would provide more security for children if a bereavement was to occur.

3. **That consideration and sensitivity needs to be given where bereavement of the tenant has occurred.**

Concern was expressed about how issues would be dealt with where a bereavement of the tenant occurred in view of the forthcoming changes in the tenancy strategy.

The next two recommendations are specific to the consultation process and include: -

4. **That consultation should include all relevant equalities and resident groups, Housing Associations and Elected Members; and**
5. **That the results of the consultation should be fed back to the Regeneration and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Panel at appropriate intervals.**

On behalf of the Panel, I would like to thank Adam Goldsmith, Housing Investment Strategy Manager and Iain Thomson, Service Improvement Manager for attending the meeting and presenting an update as well as responding to questions raised by Members. I look forward to receiving a response from you no later than **3rd February 2012** on the recommendations and comments outlined above.

Kind regards,



Councillor Jane Kidd
Chair – Regeneration and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Panel

cc. Jo Miller, Chief Executive
Chair/Vice Chair of O.S.M.C.
Cabinet
Gary Wells, Assistant Director Strategic Housing
Adam Goldsmith, Housing Investment Strategy Manager

PD/JB

27th January 2012

Councillor Jane Kidd
Chair – Regeneration and Environment
Overview and Scrutiny Panel
Directorate of Resources
Scrutiny Offices
2 Priory Place
Doncaster
DN1 1BN

Dear Jane

Proposed Approach to our Future Tenancy Strategy

Thank you for your letter dated 6th January, in which you raise several issues in respect of the Council's proposed Tenancy Strategy.

I am now able to respond to the points you have made following the recent Regeneration and Environment Overview & Scrutiny Panel Meeting.

6. That there should be more flexibility for single parents who do not have full residency agreements.

The Panel suggested that in the draft strategy account should be taken of parents with access to children. With the shortage of council housing and the number of split families, going forward, it is likely to be difficult to justify the guaranteed allocation of bigger accommodation for occasional visits by children, when there are some 12,000 people on the council's waiting list that require access to council housing. There is also the additional consideration of the welfare/ benefit changes shortly to be introduced, which will, if enacted in their current form, result in a benefit reduction for each bedroom which is under occupied.

However, a major review of the Council's current allocation policy is about to be undertaken to take account of the impact of the Localism Act. Officers will therefore ensure that, as part of the review, the issue that Overview and Scrutiny has raised will be factored into the options and recommendations for a new allocations policy.

7. **That there is clearer communication and clarification of the rights of children to become joint tenants where the parents are the main tenants.**

Please see answer to comment at point 3.

8. **That consideration and sensitivity needs to be given where bereavement of the tenant has occurred.**

There is specific mention to points 2 and 3 in the new guidance on allocation policies, and both these points will be considered in the allocations policy review process. Full consultation will, of course, take place with members, and any changes to the allocation policy will be considered by full Council towards the end of the year.

9. **That consultation should include all relevant equalities and resident groups, Housing Associations and Elected Members.**

A draft Tenancy strategy is currently being developed by officers, together with a comprehensive list of consultees. All the groups mentioned will be contacted for their comments, prior to a final draft being presented to elected members for approval

10. **That the results of the consultation should be fed back to the Regeneration and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Panel at appropriate intervals.**

Officers will ensure that the Regeneration and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Panel are provided with feedback as the consultation progresses.

I trust the above is helpful.

Yours sincerely

Peter Davies
Mayor of Doncaster

Councillor for Town Moor

Home Tel: 01302 342472

Email: jane.kidd@doncaster.gov.uk

6th January 2012

Peter Davies
Mayor of Doncaster
Floor 1
The Council House
College Road
Doncaster
DN1 3AJ

Dear Peter

Environmental Strategy

At the Regeneration and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Panel Meeting held on the 19th December 2011, the Panel received feedback and ratified recommendations that were made by a working group set up by the Panel to feed into the development of the Environmental Strategy

At the meeting of the working group, there was a discussion on each of the themes on Energy, Climate and the Natural Environment and I have outlined below the recommendations as well as some of the comments raised by the working group.

Theme 1 – Energy

Members considered that the priorities within this area were positive but that monitoring would be essential in supporting this theme.

Recommendations made within this area included:

1. **That Theme 1: Priority 2 - Develop energy efficient Housing and work with other sectors to improve their use of resources: should include improving the energy efficiency of 'owner occupier households' within this section, in addition to social and private rented households.**

Continued.

Page 2.

2. **That consideration is given to changes within planning procedures to improve for example, energy and water efficiency in new builds as part of Theme 1: Priority 2 - Develop energy efficient Housing and work with other sectors to improve their use of resources.**
3. **That further consideration should be given to commercial waste, clinical waste and recyclable waste within Theme 1: Priority 3 – Continue to reduce the amount of waste going to landfill and to process waste more efficiently.**

Theme 2: Climate

It was acknowledged by the group that Doncaster MBC is recognised as a good practice authority within this area but concern was expressed that the evidence base here was poor although it was felt that this could be easily overcome.

Regarding Priority 4: Water Quality, Supply and Usage, it was questioned by one Member whether we are creating this as part of the strategy to overcome it or just highlighting the issue of drought prevention. It was acknowledged that although Doncaster does not have major problems within this area, the rest of Yorkshire does which could have an impact on the Borough and its residents.

In respect of flooding issues within the Borough, it was questioned whether Doncaster Council has a moral obligation to take the necessary action to address it.

Finally, renewable energy was raised as a very important issue that should be considered as part of the strategy and further work should be done by looking at other examples of best practice.

Recommendations made within this area included:

4. **That further consideration is given to examples of best practice regarding Renewable Energy to schemes and organisations from around Britain.**
5. **That Doncaster Council need to ensure that there are systems and support mechanisms in place to assist the establishment and sustainability of future renewable schemes that are set up within the Borough.**
6. **That in respect of Theme 2: Priority 1 – Effective Flood Adaption and Emergency Planning, the problems associated with flooding within the Borough are identified and the Council ensure that partnering organisations such as the Drainage Board recognise their duty and responsibilities.**

Continued.

Page 3.

Theme 3: Natural Environment

The group believed that a number of improvements could be made in particular concerning the visual image of the Borough.

Recommendations made within this area included: -

7. **That further work needs to be undertaken to improve the visual image of the Borough, in particular, gateways and signage.**
8. **That 'allotments' should be incorporated within Theme 3: Priority 3 – Ensure Doncaster's residents can enjoy access to high quality, green spaces, the countryside, cultural heritage and public realm.**

As well as the above recommendations which were specific to the themes within the Environmental Strategy, other overarching recommendations were made as follows: -

9. **That consideration needs to be given to other organisations of best practice regarding their Environment Strategy and underlying action plans.**
10. **That a section on 'Monitoring and Reporting' is incorporated into the strategy.**

On behalf of the Panel, I would like to thank Iain Thompson, Service Improvement Manager for taking the time to meet with Members as part of the working group. The group has requested that they meet again early 2012 to look at the draft Environmental Strategy prior to it being taken to a formal panel meeting in March 2012 and to also revisit the progress of the actions and recommendations made. I look forward to receiving a response from you no later than **3rd February 2012** on the recommendations and comments outlined above.

Kind regards,



Councillor Jane Kidd
Chair – Regeneration and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Panel

cc. Jo Miller, Chief Executive
Chair/Vice Chair of O.S.M.C.
Cabinet
Peter Dale, Director of Development
Gill Gillies, Assistant Director of Environment
Iain Thomson, Service Improvement Manager

PD/JB

27th January 2012

Councillor Jane Kidd
Chair – Regeneration and Environment
Overview and Scrutiny Panel
Directorate of Resources
Scrutiny Offices
2 Priory Place
Doncaster
DN1 1BN

Dear Jane

Draft Environmental Strategy

Thank you for your letter dated 6th January, following the recent Regeneration and Environment Overview & Scrutiny Panel meeting discussion regarding the draft Environmental Strategy. I am now in a position to respond to the point raised in your letter.

I can confirm that action in relation to improving the energy efficiency of ‘owner occupied households’ is included within the scope of the Strategy, as part of the work of our Energy Team.

On the energy and water efficiency of new Housing builds, I can also confirm that sustainable construction policies are a key part of our proposed Local Development Framework, which is referred to within the Environment Strategy.

One of the draft Strategy’s priorities is on Waste, which includes action on recyclable waste. I can confirm that actions in relation to promotion of the Council’s Commercial Waste service are included.

The draft Strategy also has a priority relating to ‘Promoting Green Business and encouraging existing businesses to be Green’. This section will address points 4 and 5 in your letter.

The problems associated with flooding are fully recognised within the draft Strategy, and an entire priority has been devoted to how we effectively adapt to our circumstances. One of the key draft actions within this priority relates to establishing a memorandum of understanding with the Environment Agency, neighbouring authorities, Internal Drainage Boards, and local support groups, to establish who has responsibility for what in reducing the impact and likelihood of future flood events.

Work on improving the visual image of the Borough, and on allotments, is covered within the draft Strategy.

Finally, I can confirm that other organisations' Environmental Strategies have been considered in the development of the draft Strategy. In addition, each priority has a set of 'results' that should be attained through the implementation of the Strategy. The Council will actively monitor our progress against these, following the adoption of the final Strategy.

I trust the above is helpful. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Panel for their continuing involvement in drafting the Environmental Strategy which, once approved, will help provide a clear focus for delivery of Doncaster's environmental ambitions.

Yours sincerely

Peter Davies
Mayor of Doncaster

Councillor for Town Moor

Home Tel: 01302 342472

Email: jane.kidd@doncaster.gov.uk

6th January 2012

Peter Davies
Mayor of Doncaster
Floor 1
The Council House
College Road
Doncaster
DN1 3AJ

Dear Peter

Opportunity Centres Review

At the Regeneration and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Panel Meeting held on the 19th December 2011, the Panel received a report which provided an update on Doncaster MBC's own review into Opportunity Centres which has been undertaken to assess their value and inform the Council's ongoing budget discussions for 2012/2013.

The panel noted the contents of the report and endorsed the following recommended Option 5 which is that the Council: -

Seek to retain all the Opportunity Centres within current locations by using other Council service facilities accepting these may not be available within the current environment. If alternatives cannot be found, the four un-funded centres should close.

The various options considered were discussed by Members and in particular, there was a debate around the following recommendation (Ref 3.22) made by the Panel in its own review which was: -

To assess the feasibility of moving Opportunity Centres under the Neighbourhood Management Model or at the very least to establish closer links with the Neighbourhood Management team. This should be done by involving the Neighbourhood Managers in steering groups, writing the specifications for the Opportunity Centres and future training of the Library staff.

Continued.

Page 2.

The Panel were informed by Officers that Neighbourhood Managers had no capacity to take on the responsibility of the Centres as their numbers had reduced from 16 to 5 but certain Members felt that this was a very important recommendation and should still be looked into and that the Neighbourhood Managers hadn't been asked.

There was also a discussion around the financial costing and projected shortfall of the Opportunity Centres (as shown under the Financial Implications section of the report) which was challenged by one Member who felt that they were unacceptable in that all management costs were loaded onto the four earmarked for closure, thus skewing the figures. It also highlighted that one of the one of the Opportunity Centres identified for closure was also the highest performing one at £500 per job and had found 25% of the jobs.

Finally, I would also like to refer to your letter dated 27th October 2011, in response to the Panel's own review into Opportunity Centre. Now the internal review has been completed I would be grateful if you could revisit all of the recommendations and arrange for the action plan to be completed as outlined in the letter to you dated 28th September 2011 and returned to me as part of the response to this letter.

On behalf of the Panel, I would like to thank Julie Grant, Assistant Director for Customer Services and ICT for attending the meeting and responding to questions raised by Members. I look forward to receiving a response from you no later than 3rd February 2012 on the recommendations of the Panels own review and comments outlined above.

Kind regards,



Councillor Jane Kidd
Chair – Regeneration and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Panel

cc. Jo Miller, Chief Executive
Chair/Vice Chair of O.S.M.C.
Cabinet
Simon Wiles, Director of Finance and Corporate Services
Peter Dale, Director of Regeneration and Environment
Julie Grant, Assistant Director for Customer Services and ICT

PD/JCE

27th January 2012

Councillor Jane Kidd
Chair – Regeneration and Environment
Overview and Scrutiny Panel
Directorate of Resources
Scrutiny Offices
2 Priory Place
Doncaster
DN1 1BN

Dear Jane

Opportunity Centres Review

Thank you for your letter of the 6th January, following your Panel's consideration of the Opportunity Centres Review, at a meeting held on the 19th December 2011.

I am pleased that the Regeneration and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Panel endorsed the recommended option 5. Within the current financial environment, it was the only option that was justified, given Opportunity Centres are not a statutory service that the Council must deliver and have no core budget attached to them. I am also pleased that it looks like we may have found alternatives at no cost to the Council, as well as the integration within libraries, to maintain all eleven Opportunity Centres.

With regard to management of the Centres, the Library Service and Area Managers are already working closely to implement the Libraries Review and will continue to do so. The Opportunity Centres will be part of that close working, so all ensure the best possible services are delivered. It makes sense for those in libraries to be directly managed by that service as the advisors will be multi-skilled completing other duties also. Those not in libraries would probably sit better under Area Managers. However, this will need to be discussed with the relevant director to ensure it fits with the community agenda, and I will ensure this is achieved.

The comments with regard to costs at the meeting have been responded to with the appropriate member of scrutiny.

Finally, the recommendations from your review will be revisited and implemented, where suitable.

Yours sincerely

Peter Davies
Mayor of Doncaster

Councillor for Town Moor

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6th January 2012

Peter Davies
Mayor of Doncaster
Floor 1
The Council House
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Doncaster
DN1 3AJ

Dear Peter

Affordable Private Housing Development

At an informal meeting of the Regeneration and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Panel Meeting held on the 15th November 2011, the Panel received a presentation from officers on the Council's approach to encouraging more affordable housing in Doncaster. The Panel also met with a number of representatives from private developers and regeneration companies during which a discussion took place about how more private developments could be encouraged across the Borough, in particular affordable housing.

As a result of the informal meeting a number of recommendations were made which were ratified by the Panel at a formal meeting on the 19th December 2011. Those recommendations included the following: -

1. **That planning procedures are reviewed in order to identify potential areas of improvement, in particular for the following: -**
 - **The waiting times for responding to pre-application enquiries.**
 - **The robustness of planning guidelines being adhered to.**
 - **How planning policies could be made more flexible and what new ways of working could be developed to encourage the development of more private housing.**

During the discussion with representatives from private sector housing companies, Members listened to varying views on relationships held with Doncaster MBC. Certain negative views were based on the perception of the length of time the authority had taken to respond to pre-application planning enquiries. Concerns were expressed by Members that the time taken to consider pre-planning enquiries may delay potential development and result in more costs

It was commented by one of the representatives that private developers could be encouraged by the Local Authority to build more affordable private houses by establishing by having a more creative and flexible approach to the planning system.

It was also noted that planning is seen as something that will be one of the biggest challenges in respect of the Localism Bill.

2. That the Regeneration and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Panel have an input into the final Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) through receiving a report at a future Panel meeting.

The group considered that CIL can potentially make a big difference in the Borough and would therefore like to be able to input into it before it is finalised. The Panel recognises that there are considerations that need to be applied when using it, for example, being sensitive to housing market conditions and not stifle housing development and there is therefore a need to understand where it might and might not be viable.

3. That the appropriate Overview and Scrutiny Panel considers the issue of Neighbourhoods Plans in further detail, particularly the issue of affordable housing.

It was felt that this is an area that should be further explored either by the most appropriate Panel or as part of a joint Panel meeting to ensure that this area is being addressed at a local level.

4. That a review of pre-application planning fees for housing association ('affordable housing') schemes is undertaken with consideration given to a reduction to the level of the lowest fees charged elsewhere in Yorkshire.

It was raised that 'pre-application' fees that are charged to charitable organisations such as housing association should be reconsidered. In comparison with other local authorities, it was noted that Doncaster set fees the same as York but were more than Rotherham.

- 5. That the Regeneration and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Panel are provided with an overview of the implications of the development and building of additional bungalows.**

There was some discussion around the different building types of properties including the development of bungalows. Comments were raised that in some areas of the Borough there may be more of a demand for bungalows for older generations which could free up larger family homes currently more in demand.

- 6. That as a local authority we continue to develop with housing associations and other investors to help maximise access to all forms of development funding.**

It was commented by one of the representatives that private developers could be encouraged by the Local Authority to build more affordable private houses by establishing by bringing in more Housing Associations and other investors where they are able to access further funding.

- 7. That we review the feasibility and level of risk of providing mortgages and loans to enable residents within the Borough to purchase their own homes. This could include looking at those other authorities that are already providing such service.**

The group heard about other local authorities lending mortgages which enabled people to access financing through an alternative avenue and felt that this should be looked into further.

- 8. That further work is undertaken to look at the feasibility and potential benefits from alternative approaches and schemes to increase the delivery of affordable housing. This includes the following options: -**

- f. Deferred Land Payments**
- g. Pursuing Cross Subsidy/Multi-Site Development**
- h. Self Build**
- i. Rent to Buy and Other Tenure Options**
- j. Lend A Hand**

During the discussion a number of other models and approaches were raised which could benefit the delivery of more affordable housing. Some Members believe that these areas should be looked into further as a potential way of increasing the level of affordable housing.

On behalf of the Panel, I would like to thank Adam Goldsmith, Housing Investment Strategy Manager and Lee Tillman, Head of Strategy & Programmes for taking the time to meet with Members and help bring together representatives for an informal meeting which enabled Panel Members to have an interesting and informative debate. I look forward to receiving a response from you no later than **3rd February 2012** on the recommendations and comments outlined above.

Kind regards,

A handwritten signature in purple ink that reads "Jane Kidd". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Councillor Jane Kidd
Chair – Regeneration and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Panel

cc. Jo Miller, Chief Executive
Chair/Vice Chair of OS.M.C.
Cabinet
Peter Dale, Director of Development
Gary Wells, Assistant Director Strategic Housing
Adam Goldsmith, Housing Investment Strategy Manager
Lee Tillman, Head of Strategy & Programmes

PD/JB

31st January 2012

Councillor Jane Kidd
Chair – Regeneration and Environment
Overview and Scrutiny Panel
Directorate of Resources
Scrutiny Offices
2 Priory Place
Doncaster
DN1 1BN

Dear Jane

AFFORDABLE PRIVATE HOUSING DEVELOPMENT

Thank you for your letter dated 6th January, in which you raise several issues in respect of the Council's proposed approach to encouraging more affordable housing in Doncaster.

I am now able to respond to the points you have made following the recent Regeneration and Environment Overview & Scrutiny Panel Meeting.

1. **That planning procedures are reviewed in order to identify potential areas of improvement, in particular for the following:-**
 - **The waiting times for responding to pre-application enquiries**
 - **The robustness of planning guidelines being adhered to**
 - **How planning policies could be made more flexible and what new ways of working could be developed to encourage the development of more private housing**

The Council has, through its LDF Core Strategy, proposed a very ambitious housing target, compared to past delivery rates and projected household growth in Doncaster and, if confirmed by the inspector, will be translated into a housing land allocation which will give the housing industry a considerable choice of sites, and help support the delivery of more housing.

There is a significant supply of land with planning permission for housing at the present time, and the Core Strategy approach is to ensure that land supply continues to be more than sufficient for Doncaster's needs. Whether housing delivery will increase is, of course, also dependent upon other factors outside the Council's control, including demand for housing, reduced due to the economic conditions and future uncertainties, and restricted access to mortgages and developer finance.

The allocation of sites will reflect deliverability as well as sustainability considerations. The Council works closely with the development industry as part of structured forums, and in the context of proposals on specific sites. Possible housing sites have been assessed through the Strategic Housing Land Availability Assessment, (SHLAA), which was undertaken by a SHLAA Group, and which comprises of a wide and varied membership, including several members of the Home Builders Federation with development interests in Doncaster. Utilising this and other work, new LDF sites will be only allocated for housing where there is an active landowner/development interest in bringing the site forward for development.

The policies of the Core Strategy provide considerable flexibility for developers, while seeking to ensure that the Council's wider housing and regeneration objectives are not undermined. For example, the development of Brownfield and other urban sites are prioritised over the development of Greenfield and urban extension sites, but a balanced portfolio of sites will be allocated in recognition of market preferences, while a Phasing policy allows some later phase Greenfield sites to come forward sooner, where these can be packaged up with, or otherwise help deliver, Brownfield sites.

Another example of flexibility is affordable housing policy, which seeks to meet identified affordable housing need, and through built units on site, but not to the extent that the viability of proposals are undermined. This reflects current practice whereby developers can seek to justify reduced affordable housing provision or commuted sums, for example, for use as part of the empty properties initiative, where the alternative could be no scheme at all and no affordable housing.

- 2. That the Regeneration and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Panel have an input into the final Community Infrastructure Levy (CIL) through receiving a report at a future Panel meeting.**

Officers will work with the Panel members as CIL develops over the coming months, including a proposed workshop in March, prior to Full Council consideration after the elections.

- 3. That the appropriate Overview and Scrutiny Panel considers the issue of Neighbourhoods Plans in further detail, particularly the issue of affordable housing.**

A process for considering Neighbourhood Plan requests, and the prioritisation for dealing with those requests, is currently being developed. It is fully anticipated that Overview and Scrutiny will be consulted on this process, either through a formal Panel meeting, or at a workshop.

To assist in the understanding of the emerging Neighbourhood Planning regulations, two Planning Aid workshops have been organised. The first event, aimed at Parish Councils, TARA's and community groups took place on 19th January. The second event, to which all members will be invited, is taking place on 6th March.

- 4. That a review of pre-application planning fees for housing association ('affordable housing') schemes is undertaken with consideration given to a reduction to the level of the lowest fees charged elsewhere in Yorkshire.**

Within South Yorkshire, no Council offers discounted pre-application fees to housing associations. The fixed fees were based on size of developments regardless of public, private or charitable status of the enquirer.

- In Doncaster, housing schemes of between 10 and 199 units are charged at £200, and 200 or more units at £800
- In Sheffield, housing schemes of between 10 and 199 units are charged at £500, and 200 or more units at £800
- In Barnsley, it costs £600 for all schemes of 10 units or more
- In Rotherham, it costs £500 for all schemes of 10 units or more

In Doncaster's experience, all schemes put forward by housing associations are for less than 199 units, making our pre-application charge for housing association schemes the lowest in South Yorkshire already, with the next cheapest, Sheffield and Rotherham, being 150% higher and Barnsley 200% higher.

5. That the Regeneration and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Panel are provided with an overview of the implications of the development and building of additional bungalows.

The Council is, of course, including a small element of bungalows on its regeneration sites, for example on the Thompson & Dixon and Granby Estate sites, but private developers are still not generally making such proposals. The reasons for this before the recession were high land prices and the emphasis on achieving volume of units, but more recently, land prices have fallen and house builders are not seeking to deliver the same volumes, but are focussing on more attractive/less risky schemes.

Given the evidence of pent up and increasing demand for bungalows, it is perhaps surprising that more private schemes are not coming forward. Presumably, developers feel that despite “demand” potential, buyers would not be prepared to pay the higher unit cost. The Council can try and encourage developers to investigate the viability of more bungalow provision, but it would be difficult to “require” bungalows as part of a mix. Where the Council could achieve more bungalows, this would, of course, be on Council land with a land sale covenant or developer agreement to deliver an agreed number as part of the development. This is already happening as part of the Council’s plans to increase the supply and range of affordable housing, particularly with reference to preparing for an ageing population.

6. That as a local authority we continue to develop with housing associations and other investors to help maximise access to all forms of development funding.

The Council has a panel of Housing Association Development Partners which is developing Affordable Homes over the 2011-15 period. The schemes are funded from a variety of resources, primarily from the HCA and by borrowing raised by the individual Housing Associations, which will deliver in the region of 290 new affordable homes. This is an addition to the homes which will be provided on schemes already underway, such as the Six Streets site in Hyde Park, and from S106 provision. The Council continues to explore further initiatives to attract funding including:

- (a) progressing with a number of sites to obtain planning consent to ensure the Council is able to take advantage of any additional 'one-off' funding initiatives from the Government, or any HCA 'slippage' funding, should it become available within our existing panel members. Such funding usually requires a response at short notice, and having schemes 'shovel ready' will significantly enhance the success rate of any bids; and
- (b) Investigating institutional funding opportunities linked in with the above, and given a suitable scale development opportunity, we will be able to enter into detailed discussions. Members should note that current local market conditions and values in many parts of the Borough are such that the return on investment sought by such funders is difficult to meet. This is more likely to be a longer term solution, which will show a benefit in the 2015-19 development period.

7. That we review the feasibility and level of risk of providing mortgages and loans to enable residents within the Borough to purchase their own homes. This could include looking at those other authorities that are already providing such service.

Officers are exploring examples of where other local Authorities are currently providing mortgages, and will provide advice as to whether this would be viable in Doncaster.

8. That further work is undertaken to look at the feasibility and potential benefits from alternative approaches and schemes to increase the delivery of affordable housing. This includes the following options: -

- k. Deferred Land Payments**
- l. Pursuing Cross Subsidy/Multi-Site Development**
- m. Self Build**
- n. Rent to Buy and Other Tenure Options**
- o. Lend A Hand**

The Council policy to dispose of land at nil value to partner Housing Associations will continue. However, officers are carrying out viability appraisals across a variety of DMBC sites, in order to consider the packaging of land to create cross subsidy funding for affordable homes, without the need for grant funding. Such non-grant funded development is being actively encouraged by the HCA, and is likely to become a significant contributor to the development of affordable homes in future years.

In addition, the re-development of the Thompson and Dixon site in Edlington is an example of how cross subsidy from open market housing on the site is being invested into the 86 apartment Extra Care scheme on this site. An example of one of the benefits of such agreements is the level of HCA subsidy normally required for developments such as Thompson and Dixon site was significantly reduced from in excess of 25% to 10%. Deferred land payments will be incorporated into development agreements, as appropriate.

Discussions with providers on rent-to-buy funding have also taken place, and the Council will progress this dialogue further. We are actively seeking ways of encouraging mixed tenure development, and we will be inviting developers and investors to a Seminar in the spring to promote our aspirations and seek partners to work with.

The Land a Hand scheme is a recently introduced and specific product offered by LloydsTSB. It is an agreement entered into by the mortgage applicant for a 95% mortgage, and someone known to the applicant to provide a savings account as security against defaulting on the mortgage product working with the bank. Officers are undertaking further research to ascertain the product success and how it could be utilised within the local market.

Finally, the Council and HCA will be working more closely together to consider new models for the funding, development and management of new homes, to make a more meaningful contribution to the economy in Doncaster.

I trust the above is helpful and reassures you officers in both Housing and Planning are working together, and with partners, to maximise the delivery of more housing, and more affordable housing, in Doncaster.

Yours sincerely

Peter Davies
Mayor of Doncaster

Briefing Note

Neighbourhood Investment Plans

Doncaster's Local Investment Plan (LIP) was created at the beginning of 2011. It was produced in response to the invitation to create a LIP by the Homes and Communities agency (HCA). In a climate of major changes in Government funding into housing, it was the opportunity to set a clear list of all Doncaster's Investment Priorities over the 2011-14 period.

The HCA's priorities reflect the Government's future direction and although there may be other opportunities to access funding in addition to the affordable housing programme, without a LIP detailing Doncaster's priorities the likelihood of any bid being supported by the HCA is slim.

The Mayor and Cabinet approved the creation of Neighbourhood Investment Plans for the pilot case study ward areas identified as Edlington and Warmsworth, Mexborough and Bentley. The purpose of the Neighbourhood Investment Plan is to produce a single document that clearly sets out existing commitments for investment. It will also set out priorities for the future. Any investment identified in each Neighbourhood Investment Plan is investment that is already approved through the appropriate approval route, for example, capital expenditure – that is approved within the Council's capital programme.

Creating neighbourhood investment plans for Ward areas will further support the LIP and show that Doncaster has a good understanding of priorities at Borough and Neighbourhood level. The neighbourhood investment plan can be used to support any funding application to any Government department.

The Neighbourhood Investment Plan model is designed so it can be rolled out across the borough. The life time of the plan will reflect that of the LIP with the ability to update at agreed intervals and extend into the next strategy period.

The first Neighbourhood Investment Plan Workshop was held on the 1st November 2011 for the Edlington and Warmsworth Ward Area. The workshop was well attended by Ward Members, facilitators and community representatives. The approved priorities and plans for service areas and partners, over the 2011-15 period within the Edlington and Warmsworth Ward area were discussed with community representatives. It was also an opportunity for service areas from across the Council and partner organisations to meet and discuss their priorities and the wider impact.